

I made an appointment online and paid at TT Post and was denied a visa. Okay, but how come the Embassy won't refund my fee? They don't give me a visa, they should give me back the money.

Chagrined in Chaguanas

Thank you for your question. It is an important one that we frequently receive and clarifying this point is valuable. There are a lot of misconceptions surrounding this fee. Simply put, the US 131.00 (approximately 825 TT) paid by persons seeking a visa is an *application* fee. This means that the payment is for processing an application, not for issuance of a visa. Since the fee pays for processing, no refunds are possible. In other words, paying the fee is not related to whether you receive a visa or not.

A visa application requires a lot of work by many parts of the U.S. Government whether an applicant qualifies for a visa or not. The money collected goes to a central fund in Washington that, in turn, pays for our Embassy consular operations and reimburses other parts of the U.S. Government for their application-related services. Many people are aware that we now employ various technologies in the application process, and their use does have a cost.

Regrettably, some persons who do not qualify for visas apply and are turned down. Even if we wanted to return the application fee to those persons, by law and regulation we cannot. The rules that apply to the application fee, and the visa process in general, are not set by the American Ambassador or Consul General in Port of Spain. Those decisions are made in Washington D.C. and are applied equally throughout the world. So, if you apply for a visa in Bridgetown, Georgetown, or Cape Town, you will pay the same non-refundable application fee whether or not you are issued a visa. We hope the foregoing has helped clarify this matter.